

NATURE PRINTING

Peter Brueggeman, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Archives, 2013

NATURE PRINTING *noun*: a method of producing a print of a natural object (such as a leaf) or a textile (such as lace) by making an impression of it directly onto a soft metal printing plate under great pressure and then taking an inked impression on paper.

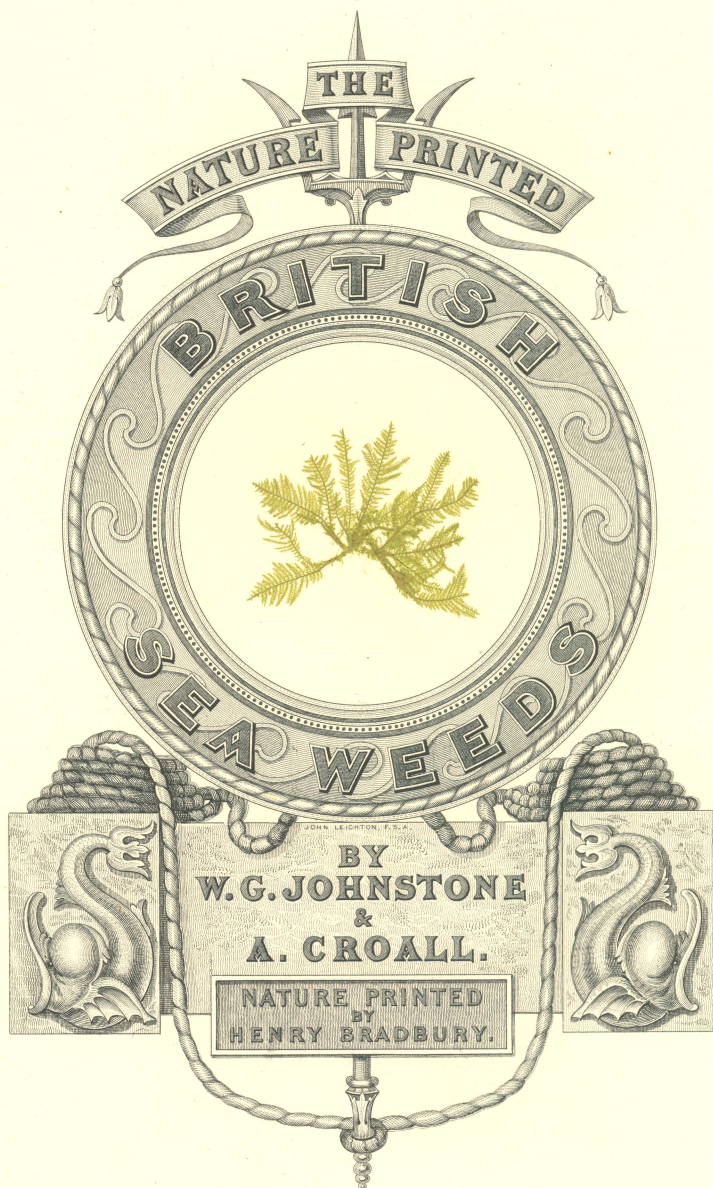
The ancient practice of nature printing leaped forward in 1853 when Alois Auer, Director of the Imperial Printing House in Vienna, enhanced the process on the press using a lead plate, though it had been proposed 20 years earlier but never put into practice. Auer was followed several months later by the English printer Henry Bradbury, and then by others.

Previously a leaf or natural specimen was coated with ink and pressed onto paper, which finger-printed it onto paper, but wore it out with successive printing. Auer's new nature printing process pressed the specimen between lead and steel sheets with a steel roller, leaving an impression on the softened lead. Then an electrotpe copperplate was made from the specimen's impression. Different color inks were then applied before printing this perfect replicate on the press, showing much finer and more natural detail than could be drawn by hand.

Auer printed plates of plants, moss, bats and batwings, snakes, fish, stone slices, etc. In England, Henry Bradbury made plates for books on ferns and for Johnstone and Croall's *Nature Printed British Sea-weeds*. The latter had 219 plates of algae, with several shown here.

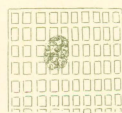
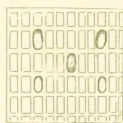
At the time, the nature print was the next-best-thing to pressed specimens mounted in a book, and much more reproducible. A nature print reveals the specimen in a realistic and natural state, improving upon hand drawings and their printed offshoots, the engraving and the lithograph.

Prints are taken from Johnstone and Croall's *Nature Printed British Sea-weeds*.



LONDON.

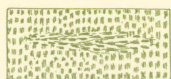
BRADBURY & EVANS, 11, BOUVERIE ST



Dictyocha dichotoma, Lamour.



3



2



5



4

Trochilium atomaria. Hb.



CHONDRIUS crispus, LYNGB.



HALYMENIA ligulata, Ag.